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SUBJECT: Guyana Immigration CWC Training Reveals Security Weaknesses

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: At GoG request, U.S. Embassy Consular officers participated as trainers in a recent Cricket World Cup Border Security Training Course for Guyanese Immigration and Customs Officers. The training made it clear that while some senior officers have basic knowledge of APIS and the Caricom Special Visa, Guyana Customs and Immigration lack the basic tools and knowledge to enforce border security during the CWC. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Guyana Immigration presented the CWC Border Security Course to approximately ten customs officers and ten immigration officers, mostly mid-level supervisors, the week of January 22-26. This represents only a fraction of the approximately forty immigration officers who are assigned to the international airport and two hundred customs officers. The line officers responsible for actually processing incoming and outgoing visitors at the airport were not trained. Training modules were presented by supervisory level Guyanese immigration and customs officers and by Embassy conoffs.

¶3. (SBU) Noting the Embassy's reputation for expertise in detecting fraudulent Guyanese documentation, Guyana Immigration invited the US Embassy to present modules during the CWC Border Security Course on detecting imposters and on analyzing Guyanese civil documents for fraud. Although the training was well-received, immigration officers expressed frustration that they did not have the "technology" necessary to analyze travel documents - namely, UV lights and magnifying loops.

¶4. (SBU) Deputy Immigration Director Vyphuis presented sessions on the Caricom Special Visa and APIS. One of the major areas of discussion was that the visa could be issued at port of entry and adjudication of the visa and collection of US\$100 cash fee would be left up to individual immigration officers. (COMMENT: Nowhere on the Special Visa website does it state that visas can be obtained at port of entry. END COMMENT.) Giving authority to local officers to adjudicate visas and accept cash fees opens up a huge venue for corruption. The potential for corruption was a major focus of the Deputy's presentation, culminating with his statement, "He who needs a lash, gets a lash," apparently referring to his discipline of corrupt officers. When asked what system immigration would have in place to account for money collected and visas issued at the airport, Vyphuis could not answer, although the visa regime is due to go into effect on February 1. Vyphuis also stated that the length of time that each visitor would be given to remain in Guyana would be at the sole discretion of the immigration officer. He stated that anyone overstaying their permitted time in Guyana would be identified and deported, although there is no procedure in place for identifying or deporting those who overstay.

¶5. (SBU) Vyphuis went on to describe plans for separating international and domestic/Caricom passengers at the airport

throughout the immigration, customs, and departure/arrival process. Passengers arriving in Guyana will be separated into domestic and international as they leave the plane, routing through separate immigration, baggage and customs procedures. Although Guyana has only one semi-functional conveyor belt for baggage, this scheme would require two belts. Departing passengers will be separated as well, with domestic passengers being routed out of the airport building after screening to wait in an undetermined area, bypassing the routine final security and document screening in the international departure lounge. As of February 1, if Guyana receives supplies, all passengers will fill out a special CARICOM arrival/departure. Vyphuis also alluded to a complex wristband scheme for domestic/CARICOM passengers, stating that the wristbands would be as good as a passport for domestic passengers.

16. (SBU) While briefing on APIS, Vyphuis stated that passengers should be allowed to travel uninterrupted and if adverse information is garnered, the immigration officers should notify the next port of entry rather than stopping the passenger. Currently, Guyana's only lookout system is based on paper lists of no-fly passengers. During discussion on the use of APIS, immigration officers were advised that they will not have time to consult Guyana's paper-based no-fly lists while processing passengers and that the information on Guyana's lists would be input into APIS. However, Vyphuis was unable to answer how or when this data sharing would take place.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: While DHS and some of the other CARICOM countries are focused on APIS implementation and enforcing border security throughout the region, Guyana lacks even basic fraud detection tools and training. Guyana's CWC border security plan does not appear to be realistic, given the timeframe and infrastructure available and the potential for corruption is high. The Guyana Immigration Office is notoriously corrupt. The last Director of Immigration was suspended last spring after 100 blank Guyanese passports went

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missing and her suspension was merely the latest in a string of Immigration Office scandals. Putting adjudicating and fee collection authority in the hands of immigration officers who only earn only two or three hundred dollars a month will surely result in only more corruption. End Comment.

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